

Washington, DC – Consumers could save money and waste less water and energy under a proposal unveiled today to expand a little known but successful program to encourage the manufacture and sale of water-efficient consumer products. U.S. Reps. George Miller (D-CA) and Rush Holt (D-NJ) have introduced a bill to authorize the WaterSense program, modeled after the popular EnergyStar program that has helped Americans save more than \$19 billion on their utility bills.

WaterSense evaluates and labels high-performance water efficient products and allows consumers to easily identify them on the shelf. Created in 2006 by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), WaterSense currently publishes water saving criteria for products like sink faucets and landscape irrigation services. According to the EPA, the program is already saving more than 277 million gallons of water annually.

However, manufacturers and consumers are missing a significant opportunity of having more products evaluated. The Miller-Holt bill, The Water Advanced Technologies for Advanced Resource Use (WATER) Act, would authorize WaterSense as a permanent program under the EPA. Congressional authorization would provide funding for the program to expand public outreach and cover more options, from high-performing showerheads to high-efficiency plumbing services.

"WaterSense lets consumers make smarter decisions about their water use and the money they spend," said Miller. "At a time when households all over California and the nation are being asked to limit water use, expanding WaterSense is a critical step to both relieve demand for water, save consumers money, and stimulate the economy. In addition, improving our water use not only reduces demand today, but it also helps to ensure a clean and reliable water supply for future generations."

"The WATER Act is a consumer-friendly effort to help cut down on energy use from the heating, treating, and delivering of water," Holt said. "Promoting water efficiency is an excellent way to help citizens save money on their energy as well as their water bills in these tough economic times."

In addition to expanding products covered by the WaterSense, the WATER Act directs the federal government to lead by example by purchasing water-efficient products and services,

which would not only reduce the government's energy and water consumption but cut the taxpayer costs over time. The WATER Act would also help consumers invest in products and services that help save water and money by boosting funding for local and regional rebate and incentive programs that encourage the early adoption of water efficient products and services.

The EPA anticipates that 36 states will face local, regional, or statewide water shortages by 2013, and many regions of the country have faced water shortages in recent years. A 30% improvement in water use efficiency could save as much as 5.4 billion gallons of water per day, according to the American Water Works Association.

The WATER Act has been endorsed by a growing list of supporters — from industry groups to environmental organizations to public utilities — including the Alliance for Water Efficiency, Natural Resources Defense Council, the United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters, American Rivers, Plumbing Manufacturers Institute, the Water Innovations Alliance, Clean Water Action, the Coalition for Alternative Wastewater Treatment, Food and Water Watch, the Irrigation Association, California Association of Sanitation Agencies, Association of California Water Agencies, the Pacific Institute, and the Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors Association.